

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 267

TM 013 084

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TITLE Survey of Recent Graduates of the Stanford Teacher Education Program.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; College Graduates; *Graduate Surveys; Higher Education; High Schools; Predictor Variables; Secondary School Teachers; *Sex Differences; *Teacher Education; Teacher Interns; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS *Stanford Teacher Education Program

ABSTRACT

To determine significant influences on the career choices of graduates of the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), a three-page survey was mailed to all members of five recent graduating classes (1983 through 1987). These five classes consisted of 262 individuals, of whom 243 persons could be reached. A total of 132 female and 65 male subjects responded in time for inclusion in the data analysis. Survey questions of particular interest to the scope of this paper covered employment as high school teachers, subjects taught, reasons for leaving teaching careers, length of time as teachers prior to career changes, and internship experiences and sex as determinants of career choice. The most significant finding was that the type of teaching experience a student had undertaken while in the STEP influenced the student's career decision. Of the sample, 78.9% were high school teachers. Forty of the subjects were non-teachers. (TJH)

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SURVEY OF RECENT GRADUATES OF
THE STANFORD TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

The state of teacher training in this country is a topic of intense interest. At Stanford University, teacher training is carried out through the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP). However, little if any research has been conducted which can inform us of the career paths taken and decisions made by recent graduates of STEP. This paper highlights some of the findings from the Survey of Recent STEP Graduates, in particular, the significant influences on the career paths chosen by new teachers.

In the Autumn of 1987 the Stanford School of Education, under the direction of the Dean, sought to answer some of the questions which persist about the occupational choices of recent STEP alumni. Some of these questions are: How many graduates are currently high school teachers? Of those who leave teaching, what reasons do they give for their decision? How long do they teach before changing fields? What are the significant determinants of career choice?

A survey, three pages in length, was designed and sent to all members of the five most recent STEP graduating classes (1983 through 1987, inclusive) for whom a valid current address was available.

The population of these five classes consists of 262 individuals, one of whom is no longer living and 18 individuals for whom no valid address was obtainable. Thus, 243 individuals received a copy of the survey. Of these, 197 responses were obtained yielding a response rate of 81.1%. Three additional responses were received too late to be included in the analyses. An analysis of the respondents shows that there is no differential in response rate due to sex, graduating class, or sex by graduating class group. Therefore, no adjustment was needed for response bias and all results can be assumed to reflect the underlying population without bias.

The survey, along with a cover letter explaining its purpose, was mailed to all 243 individuals with a valid address during the first week of December 1987. Each survey was numbered to allow for follow-up of non-respondents. One week later, a postcard reminder was sent to all individuals who had not returned the survey at that point in time. During

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the second week in January 1988, a second copy of the survey was sent to all non-respondents. About 67% of the potential respondents had sent back a completed survey by the time the second copy was mailed. Data collection was essentially completed by the first week in February.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The number of recipients and respondents from each graduating class is:

YEAR	SURVEY RECIPIENTS	RESPONDENTS	% OF ALL RESPONDENTS
1983	36	30	15.2
1984	39	34	17.3
1985	58	47	23.9
1986	51	38	19.3
1987	59	48	24.4
TOTAL	243	197	100.0

Of the respondents, 132 or 67.0% are women. The present age of the respondents range from 22 to 48 with a mean of 27.5 years.

STEP BACKGROUND

The subject areas of the respondents while enrolled in STEP are:

SUBJECT	N	% OF TOTAL
English	67	34.0
Social Studies	65	33.0
Physical Science	22	11.2
Life Science	34	17.3
Foreign Language	21	10.7
Mathematics	40	20.3
Elementary	3	1.5
Other	15	7.6

Percentages do not add to 100 since some respondents had two subject areas.

Subject areas in which respondents currently hold a valid credential are:

SUBJECT	N	% OF TOTAL
English	64	32.5
Social Studies	62	31.5
Physical Science	19	9.6
Life Science	34	17.3
Foreign Language	22	11.2

Mathematics	43	21.8
Other	26	13.2

Percentages do not add to 100 since some respondents are credentialled in more than one subject.

During their year in STEP, the teaching experience consisted of an internship for 45.1% in the sample, student teaching for 19.0% of the respondents, and both an internship and student teaching for the remaining 35.9%.

CAREER DECISIONS

Respondents were asked to check one of four possible career paths that most closely reflect their own since graduation from STEP. In the sample, 146 or 74.1% entered the teaching profession on a full or parttime basis; 24 or 12.2% entered but subsequently left the teaching profession; 11 or 5.6% did something else and then entered the profession; the remaining 16 or 8.1% never entered the profession.

At the present time, 84.4% of the respondents are working in the field of education with 78.9% of all respondents engaged in high school teaching. An analysis by year of graduation shows a trend where individuals are less likely to be teaching the longer they have been out of STEP. This trend is statistically significant ($p < .05$). Of those who are currently teaching, 72.6% are employed in a public school setting with the remaining 27.4% employed by a private school. There is no significant difference among graduating classes with respect to school setting.

YEAR	TEACHING		NOT TEACHING	
	N	% OF CLASS	N	% OF CLASS
1983	20	66.7	10	33.3
1984	22	68.8	10	31.2
1985	32	74.4	11	25.6
1986	32	88.9	4	11.1
1987	40	90.9	4	9.1
TOTAL	146	78.9	39	21.1

Not all respondents listed their present job title. Hence it was not possible to determine for every individual if they are presently teaching.

REASONS FOR LEAVING TEACHING

In this sample, 40 of the respondents had either left teaching (24 respondents) or had never entered the field (16 respondents). These individuals were asked to list the reason(s) for that decision. Their results are as follows:

REASON	N	% OF TOTAL
Low Salary	10	25.0
Better Job	11	27.5
General Frustration	8	20.0
Discipline Problems	7	17.5
Administrative Problems	8	20.0
Curricula Problems	5	12.5
Class Size Problems	6	15.0
Teaching Out of Area	2	5.0
Family Responsibilities	11	27.5
District Layoffs	2	5.0
Contract Not Renewed	1	2.5
Further Schooling	6	15.0
No Suitable Job	3	7.5
Other	12	30.0

Percentages do not add to 100 since many respondents gave multiple reasons for leaving teaching. Unfortunately, respondents were not asked to provide further details for the category of Other reasons for leaving teaching, so no additional information is available.

Respondents who are currently working outside of education were asked to list their present occupations. No single job or occupational category dominated this list. Individuals who leave teaching go into a variety of other professions.

An analysis of the present annual salaries of respondents shows that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in the salaries earned by those who are currently teaching and those who are not. On average, teachers earn \$21,200 annually while non-teachers earn about \$27,400 annually. Although teachers can supplement their income with summer earnings, there is no assurance that they can do so at the same rate as their academic salaries.

SEX AS A DETERMINANT OF CAREER CHOICES

There is no significant difference among men and women in terms of their likelihood to entered into teaching after STEP and to remain in the profession. Men are slightly more likely, but not significantly so, to leave teaching for another field, while women are slightly more likely to have never entered teaching.

In addition, there are no significant differences between men and women in the reasons they cite for having left teaching. One interesting result is that men were as likely as women to cite family responsibilities as a reason for changing fields. However, since few respondents in this sample are non-teachers (40 out of 197), any significance test based on this group will lack power.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE AS A DETERMINANT OF CAREER CHOICES

The type of teaching experience a respondent has during STEP is a highly significant predictor of their career path after STEP. There are three types of teaching experiences during the STEP year: as a paid intern, as a student teacher, or as both. Respondents who were student teachers only are significantly less likely ($p < .05$) to go directly into teaching after STEP and to remain in the profession.

If we classify respondents into two career paths: those who went directly into teaching and are still teaching, and those who chose an alternative career path (entered and left, delayed entering, or never entered), then we find the following results:

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	TAUGHT CONTINUOUSLY		OTHER PATTERN	
	N	% OF GROUP	N	% OF GROUP
Paid Intern	62	70.5	26	29.5
Student Teacher	22	59.5	15	40.5
Both	60	85.7	10	14.3
TOTAL	144	73.9	51	26.1

There is a significant effect ($p < .05$) where student teachers are less likely to enter into teaching immediately after STEP and to remain in the field than paid interns. Respondents who were both interns and student teachers are the most likely to have been teaching continuously since STEP. This type of trend suggests an additive effect where the increase in responsibility or complexity resulting from an internship, in addition to or instead of student teaching, leads to a greater commitment to teaching.

An alternative explanation is also possible. Individuals who are able to obtain paid internships may already exhibit a greater professional identification with the field, and thus are more likely to remain in the profession.

An analysis of career patterns for the school districts where respondents held paid internships shows no significant difference among districts in later career choice. However, there is probably a confounding between the type of STEP teaching experience and the school district of STEP teaching. That is, one plausible scenario could be that it is more likely for a STEP student to obtain a paid internship, which is known to be a determinant of career pattern, in some school districts than in others. In this way, the choice of school district may have an indirect effect on one's career path later on. Unfortunately, the data from the survey does not enable us to disentangle this possible confounding.

We can rule out sex as a possible explanatory factor in the role of internship as a determinant of career patterns because there are no significant differences between men and women in the type of teaching experience in the STEP year or in the school districts that they have their internships.

GRADUATE WORK SINCE FINISHING STEP

A significant number of respondents have pursued additional graduate work since finishing STEP. Of the 197 in the sample, 45 or 22.8%, have gone on to other graduate education. The distribution of their work is as follows:

TYPE OF GRADUATE WORK	N	% OF TOTAL
No additional degrees	25	55.6
Master's degree	5	11.1
Doctorate, education	3	6.7
Doctorate, other fields	3	6.7
Other degrees	9	20.0
TOTAL	45	100.0

No single institution dominates the list of schools where the respondents have pursued their graduate work. In fact, there is a wide variety of institutions listed by the respondents. UC, Berkeley was the most common institution of graduate work and was listed by 4 respondents. Only one of the respondents who has received a degree after STEP did so at Stanford.

LENGTH OF TEACHING SERVICE

For each yearly cohort, there are two groups of interest: those who have been teaching continuously since STEP, and those who dropped out of the profession. Data on the first group informs us of the average teaching load for current teachers. The second group can inform us of how long individuals teach before they leave the field.

The following table reports the average teaching load for each yearly cohort for those individuals who have been teaching continuously since STEP and are currently high school teachers:

YEAR	N	SEMESTERS OF TEACHING		SUMMERS OF TEACHING	
		FULLTIME	PARTTIME	FULLTIME	PARTTIME
1983	16	8.00	1.63	0.31	0.31
1984	21	6.14	0.62	0.43	0.14
1985	27	4.74	0.30	0.19	0.19
1986	29	2.62	0.28	0.34	0.07
1987	34	0.94	0.26	0.18	0.06

There are some patterns in the above table worth noting. First, most teachers engage in fulltime teaching during the academic year. Second, parttime teaching becomes more common the longer an individual has been out of STEP. Third, few teachers engage in summer teaching.

The final table reports on those individuals who taught for a period of time but then subsequently left the teaching profession:

YEAR	N	SEMESTERS OF TEACHING BEFORE LEAVING
1983	5	5.00
1984	7	5.43
1985	8	3.00
1986	2	2.50
1987	0	—

No one from the graduating class of 1987 had started as a teacher and had already left the field at the time of the survey. For this very small sample, it appears that those who leave do so after about 2 1/2 to 3 years of teaching. As other STEP alumni change professions, it is of interest whether this value holds true for other cohorts.

CONCLUSION

This survey has answered some of the interesting questions concerning the career choices of recent STEP graduates. In particular, the finding that the type of teaching experience a student undertakes while in STEP may influence their career decisions has been of great interest to administrators in STEP and the Stanford School of Education.

This study should be viewed as a preliminary investigation of the entry of new teachers into the profession and their career decisions in the first few years. It would be of interest to compare these results with those of graduates from other teacher training programs across the country. Are the findings summarized in this paper characteristic of the experiences of other new teachers?

Beyond the first five years in teaching, what are some of the important career decisions faced by teachers? What are the career patterns of individuals who completed teacher training more than five years ago? What are they doing now? What additional issues need to be addressed in any survey of teachers and their careers?

It is hoped that this study has not only been informative, but will also serve as an impetus to further research concerning teacher training and career development.